

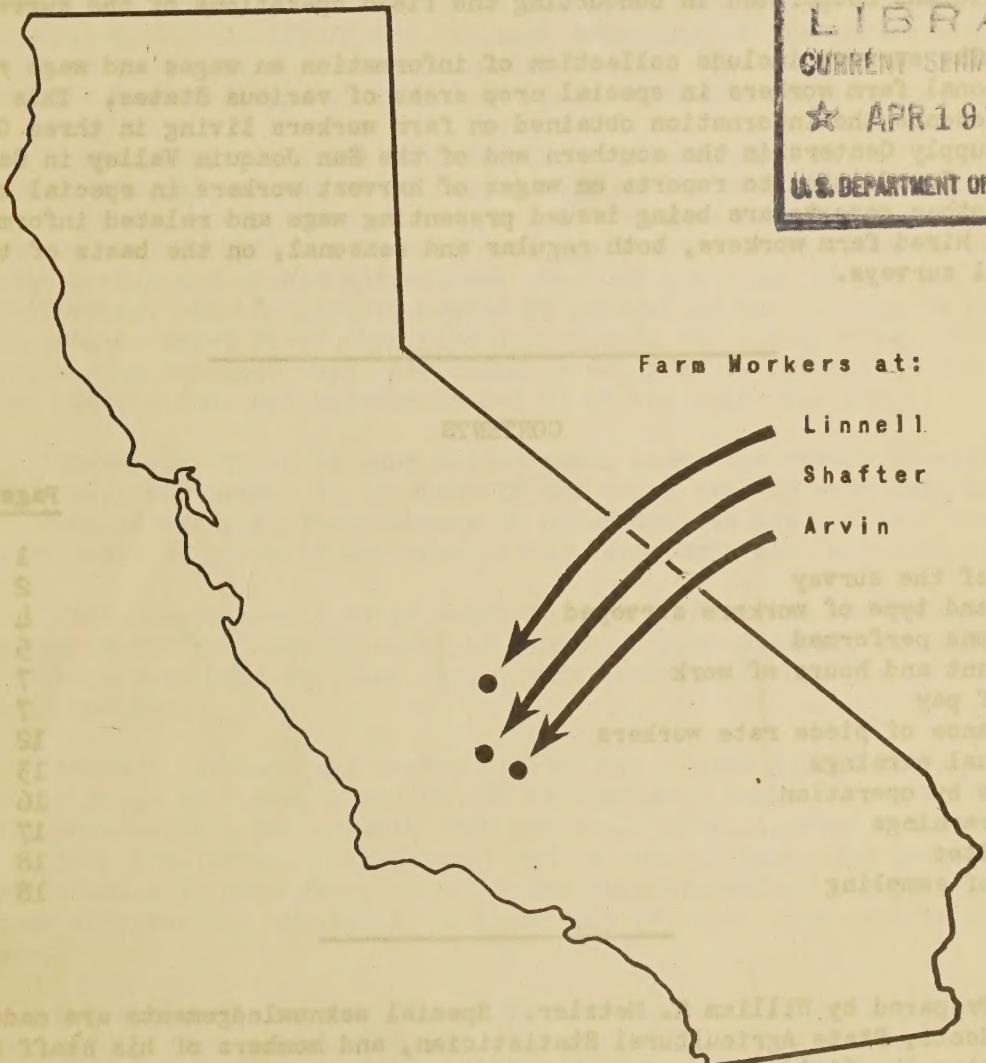
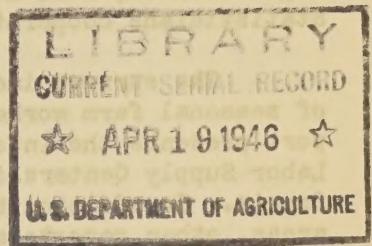
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Bureau of Agricultural Economics

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WAGES AND WAGE RATES OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS IN  
USDA LABOR SUPPLY CENTERS AT ARVIN, LINNELL,  
AND SHAFTER, CALIFORNIA, JUNE 1945



Surveys of Wages and Wage Rates in Agriculture, Report Number 6

Washington, D. C.  
December 1945

## PREFATORY NOTE

This is the sixth of a series of reports being issued by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, presenting results secured from new enumerative sample surveys of farm wages and farm wage rates. The surveys were planned and conducted under the general direction of Conrad Taeuber, Office of the Chief, by a Bureau-wide Committee, with Louis J. Ducoff as Chairman. Members of the Wage Project Committee are as follows: Glen T. Barton, Emerson M. Brooks, Charles F. Cannell, Charles A. Gibbons, Margaret Jarman Hagood, Roger F. Hale, Earl E. Houseman, Barbara B. Reagan. The State Agricultural Statisticians cooperated in conducting the field operations of the surveys.

The surveys include collection of information on wages and wage rates of seasonal farm workers in special crop areas of various States. This report presents the information obtained on farm workers living in three USDA Labor Supply Centers in the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley in California. In addition to reports on wages of harvest workers in special crop areas, other reports are being issued presenting wage and related information for all hired farm workers, both regular and seasonal, on the basis of the national surveys.

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WAGES AND WAGE RATES OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS IN USDA LABOR SUPPLY CENTERS AT ARVIN, LINNELL, AND SHAFTER, CALIFORNIA  
JUNE 1945

SUMMARY

This survey covered employment and earnings of workers housed in three of the five USDA labor supply centers, located in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley in California. The Centers or Labor Camps provide an important part of the labor supply used in harvesting the many crops grown in this area. In each of the three camps surveyed, a sample of families was selected, and schedules were secured for each worker in the sample families. The survey was made during the period of potato and plum harvests. Results indicate significant differences in employment and earnings of individuals and families depending on the amount and type of work and the number of workers in the family. The results also indicate that the amount and type of work done varies with the stage of harvest.

Workers housed in the Shafter Labor Center worked fairly full weeks, as the potato harvest was still practically at its peak, while workers in the Arvin area, where the peak had passed, averaged somewhat fewer hours for the week. Work in the Linnell area was comparatively slack as the pruning season and orange harvest was over and the plum harvest was not yet in full swing. At the Linnell Center 36 percent of the men and 51 percent of the women worked fewer than five days during the survey week. The hours worked during the week were most commonly reported as between 55 and 65 in the Shafter Camp and between 45 and 55 at the other two camps.

There were twice as many men as women among the worker population of the camps surveyed. Girls under 18 and women over 45 were less likely to be doing field work than persons in other age and sex groups. Younger workers under 18 years of age were particularly numerous in potato-picking.

Most common hourly rates received were 70 cents at the Arvin center, 75 cents at Shafter, and 85 cents at Linnell. Approximately one-third of the workers were paid at piece rates, which were quite uniform from one area to another.

Average earnings per worker for the week were \$38.40 at the Arvin Center, \$32.10 at Linnell, and \$41.50 at Shafter. Women earned approximately one-fourth less per week than the men. This difference was largely due to less regularity of employment and to type of work done rather than to differences in wage rates paid for the same operation. Slack work periods affected the employment and earnings of women much more than those of men.

Berry picking was the lowest paid operation. Berry pickers earned an average of 63 cents an hour, \$3.90 a day, and \$17.30 for the week. Workers engaged in loading and hauling earned the most, partly because of longer hours and partly because of better rates of pay. These men had average earnings of \$9.20 a day and \$64.80 for the week. Potato pickers earned an average of \$7.20 per day and plum pickers, \$7.30.

Families with one worker averaged earnings of \$35.30 at Linnell and \$59.90 at Arvin. The few families with five or six workers averaged approximately \$200 for the week. The average family at Arvin had 2.6 working members and a weekly wage income of \$99.60; at Linnell, 1.8 working members earning \$60.50; and at Shafter, 2.5 working members earning approximately \$100.00.

WAGES AND WAGE RATES OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS IN USDA  
LABOR SUPPLY CENTERS AT ARVIN, LINNELL,  
AND SHAFTER, CALIFORNIA,  
JUNE 1945

The southern end of the Sacramento - San Joaquin Valley serves as a reservoir of farm labor for much of the Pacific Coast area. Farm laborers live there partially because of the mild climate, but mainly because of the relatively large amount of winter and spring employment that is available. The harvest season in northern California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho generally lasts only 3 or 4 months during the summer and fall, but several harvest operations are active during the winter in the south end of the Valley. Picking of emperor grapes extends into December; picking of olives and navel oranges comes in December and January; and the cotton harvest lasts from October until March. In the spring there are Valencia oranges, potatoes, and plums to be harvested.

After labor requirements for these crops are met, the workers move northward to harvest apricots, peaches, pears, grapes, apples, tomatoes, potatoes, and other highly seasonal crops. This northward movement generally ends in September or October. The workers then move back to their homes or to the Government camps in Kern and Tulare Counties.

Timing of the survey.--While the peak season for farm labor in this area is in December and January, another important period comes in June with the harvesting of oranges, plums, and potatoes. During this latter period, a survey of farm wage rates and earnings was made in three of the five USDA labor supply centers located in the area. Housing accommodations available in these centers are as follows:

<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Housing units 1/</u>
Arvin	Kern	225
Linnell	Tulare	283
Shafter	Kern	223
Wasco	Kern	212
Woodville	Tulare	245

The survey was made at the Arvin camp for the week ended June 16, and at the Linnell and Shafter camps for the week ended June 23. Although both the Arvin and Shafter camps are in the same county, the potato harvest was at its peak in the Shafter area and was nearing completion in the Arvin area. With other crops also at various stages of advance at the three localities, some observed differences in wage earnings reflected the volume of harvest operations in process rather than customary locality differences. No surveys were made at Wasco and Woodville, which are located very close to the Shafter and Linnell camps and should have similar employment characteristics.

1/ Data from "Weekly Population Reports of Farm Labor Supply Centers," War Food Administration, Office of Labor.

The survey was timed for an active part of the potato and plum harvests, a little after Valencia orange operations. The weekly reports of the Agricultural Extension Service, Farm Labor Office, indicate that the potato harvest in the county as a whole was 60 percent complete, and that employment had just started to decline (table 1). Plum picking was about 20 percent complete in the vicinity of both Arvin and Linnell when the surveys were made at these camps. Five hundred more workers were employed in the plum harvest in Kern County the week following the survey and one thousand more in Tulare. Grape thinning was 75 percent complete in Kern County when the reports were made at Arvin, and employment was on the decline. Apple picking had just started in Tulare County and berry picking was at its peak. All except the potatoes and plums, however, are small operations.

These seasonal factors were highly important from the standpoint of employment and earnings at the camps surveyed, since fuller work-weeks are provided the workers during the peak harvest period of important crops. The data reflect the highly variable nature of the workers' opportunity for farm work.

Table 1.--Estimated number of seasonal farm workers employed in Kern and Tulare Counties during weeks ending June 9, 16, 23, and 30, 1945. <sup>1/</sup>

County and Crop	:	Estimated number of seasonal workers in week ending						
	:	June 9	:	June 16	:	June 23	:	June 30
<b>Kern County</b>								
Total <sup>2/</sup>		11,440		13,010		13,205		11,675
Potatoes		8,200		8,300		7,000		5,500
Plums		--		1,600		2,800		2,700
Hay		1,050		1,150		1,150		1,200
Grapes		250		250		250		150
Vegetables		600		600		600		800
<b>Tulare County</b>								
Total <sup>2/</sup>		5,210		6,685		8,430		8,620
Plums		600		1,550		2,100		3,000
Cotton		1,700		1,700		1,700		1,000
Peaches		850		500		750		250
Potatoes		--		400		475		600
Tomatoes		--		600		1,350		1,900
Hay		1,200		1,400		1,400		1,400
Berries		200		300		300		150

<sup>1/</sup> Data from California Weekly Farm Labor Reports. Compiled by Agricultural Extension Service, Farm Labor Project. Issues for weeks ending June 9, 16, 23, and 30, 1945.

<sup>2/</sup> Includes workers in minor operations not listed in this table.

Number and type of workers surveyed.--The population at the Arvin Camp at the time of the survey was 808 persons. Twenty-seven of these were Mexican Nationals and the rest were U. S. Whites who were members of 169 family groups. The Mexican Nationals were not included in the survey, but reports were obtained from 34 of the family groups, a sample of 20 percent. These families contained 87 workers or an average of 2.6 per family.

At Linnell the camp population was 1172 persons at the time of the survey. All were U. S. Whites. Nine were single individuals, and the rest were members of 251 family groups. Wage data were collected from 73 of the household units, a sample of approximately 30 percent. These families contained 136 workers, an average of 1.8 per family.

At Shafter 1033 persons were in residence at the time of the survey; 8 of these were single and the rest were members of family groups. Reports were obtained from 87 workers.

There were approximately two males to each female worker (Table 2). The greatest differences in number of males and females was among workers under 18 years of age and workers 45 years old or over. Boys were almost three times as numerous as girls, and men 45 and over were almost five times as numerous as women 45 and over. These figures tend to bear out observations made by WFA camp managers that since wages have risen, many of the older and less able-bodied women have stopped doing field work. The assistance of workers "who can't make wages" is no longer so badly needed to supplement the family income.

Workers under 18, both male and female, were particularly numerous at the Shafter camp. Boys and girls are quite adept at picking potatoes, while they are used less in such operations as picking fruit or operating farm equipment. On the other hand, very few workers 45 and over, either male or female, were enumerated at the Shafter camp. Older workers frequently find it very difficult to do the bending or stooping required for picking up potatoes.

Nearly half (46 percent) of the potato pickers surveyed were youths and children under 18 years of age. These 47 young pickers included 18 workers whose ages varied from 8 to 12 years. There is a saying that is common among potato, pea, and prune pickers, "The young ones are so limber they can do this work easier than we can."

Table 2.--Age and sex of workers surveyed in USDA labor supply centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, June 1945.

Age and sex	Arvin		Linnell		Shafter	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Males - total	58	100	93	100	57	100
Under 18	21	36	24	26	25	44
18 - 44	24	42	44	47	26	46
45 - over	13	22	25	27	6	10
Females - total	29	100	41	100	30	100
Under 18	5	17	10	24	11	37
18 - 44	20	69	27	66	18	60
45 - over	4	14	4	10	1	3

Operations performed.--A wide variety of farm operations was performed by the workers sampled. Those at the Shafter camp were largely engaged either in picking potatoes or in performing other operations involved in the potato harvest, while the major activity of the workers at the two other camps was in connection with the harvest of plums (table 3). Among the male workers surveyed in all three camps, 68 were employed at potato picking, 63 at plum picking, 21 at loading or hauling, and smaller numbers were engaged in operating farm equipment other than trucks, picking apples, irrigating, chopping cotton, and picking berries. A majority of the males who reported potato picking or cotton chopping were under 18 years of age. Only adult men generally engaged in such operations as loading, hauling, irrigating, or operating farm equipment.

Table 3.--Operations performed by workers surveyed in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, during the survey week, by age and sex of workers, June 1945.

	Arvin			Linnell			Shafter		
Operation and sex of worker	Under 18	18-44 and 45	over	Under 18	18-44 and 45	over	Under 18	18-44 and 45	over
Total	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	
Male	1/	25	25	17	24	51	26	25	27
Female	I/	6	24	5	10	30	3	11	17
Potato picking									
Male	14	9	4	-	-	-	22	16	3
Female	-	6	1	-	1	-	11	15	1
Other potato operations									
Male	1	4	-	-	3	-	2	9	1
Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Plum picking									
Male	5	3	8	11	23	15	-	-	-
Female	3	7	1	2	13	-	-	-	-
Other plum operations									
Male	2	2	3	-	5	4	-	-	-
Female	-	1	1	-	4	1	-	-	-
Berry picking									
Male	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	-
Female	-	-	-	5	8	2	-	-	-
Apple picking									
Male	-	-	-	1	5	3	-	-	-
Female	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Grape thinning or leafing									
Male	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Female	3	9	2	-	1	-	-	-	-

(continued)

Table 3.--Operations performed by workers surveyed in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, during the survey week, by age and sex of workers, June 1945, continued.

	Arvin		Linnell		Shafter	
Operation and: sex of worker:	Under 18	Over 18	Under 18	Over 18	Under 18	Over 18
Cotton chopping						
Male	-	-	4	2	-	-
Female	-	-	1	1	-	-
Irrigation						
Male	-	2	2	1	2	-
Operating farm equipment, loading, haul- ing						
Male	-	3	-	1	4	1
Other operations						
Male	2	2	-	3	2	3
Female	-	2	-	2	1	-

1/ Somewhat more than the total number of workers since a number of workers engaged in more than one operation.

2/ Excluding operations in connection with the potato and plum harvests.

Potato picking was the operation reported most frequently by female workers in these camps (35 cases) and plum picking was next most frequently reported (28 cases). Berry picking, grape thinning or leafing, plum packing, work in olive plant, cotton chopping, turkey picking, guayule chopping, potato grading, and onion picking were reported by smaller numbers of workers. Potato picking, berry picking, and grape thinning were frequently done by girls under 13 years of age. More women than men were employed at berry picking and grape thinning.

A comparison of the operations performed by workers in these camps with those that were current in the area indicates several interesting facts. While 1700 people were employed at cotton chopping in Tulare County during the survey week, only 8 of the workers surveyed at the Linnell camp were engaged in it. Yet Linnell is located at the northern edge of the cotton area in the county. Evidently the people in this camp prefer to work in harvest operations, and particularly in tree crops. In spite of extensive employment in haying operations in both counties, very few of the camp residents engaged in them. People employed for haying are frequently able to obtain housing from the farm operator and hence would not be using USDA housing.

A few workers surveyed were engaged in agricultural packing or processing operations. Eight workers at the Linnell camp were engaged either in an olive processing plant or in packing plums. One worker at Arvin was operating a grain elevator. Several workers at Arvin and Shafter reported work in sorting or packing sheds for plums or potatoes. However, the proportion of camp residents reporting packing or processing work was remarkably low.

Employment and hours of work.--As already indicated in the discussion on timing of the survey, the data from Arvin and Shafter reflect different stages of the potato harvest. At Linnell, the plum harvest was just getting under way. The amount of employment varied accordingly. Eleven men and 9 women at Linnell reported that they had worked for 2 days or less, (table 4).

Work was most regular at the Shafter camp, where all workers reported employment for five days or longer. The usual work-week in the potato harvest is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  days during the short peak period. With harvest at peak in the Shafter area, 68 percent of the male and 83 percent of the female workers reported working  $5\frac{1}{2}$  days during the week.

Women worked somewhat less regularly than the men at Arvin and Linnell where employment was not at peak levels. Approximately 30 percent of the women at the Arvin camp worked fewer than five days, compared with 16.0 percent of the men. At Linnell 51 percent of the women worked fewer than five days, compared to 36 percent of the men. At this camp few of the women worked a full week, even though they were working on the same job as their husbands or other members of the family.

One in 20 of the men in the three camps and one woman in 10 at Linnell worked for seven days in the week. The workers at the Linnell camp who worked on Sundays were picking plums, while those at Arvin and Shafter were either irrigating or operating farm equipment.

Eight percent of the men and 16 percent of the women in the worker population of the three camps worked fewer than 25 hours during the week. The most usual work-week was between 45 and 55 hours at the Arvin and Linnell camps and between 55 and 65 at the Shafter camp, the latter evidently reflecting the rush of the potato harvest. Among the workers surveyed, three irrigators at the Arvin camp reported working  $8\frac{1}{4}$  hours during the week. At Shafter potato swamplers, who load the sacks onto trucks, reported working as many as 16 hours a day for a  $5\frac{1}{2}$ -day week. A swamper at Arvin reported working 102 hours in 6 days during the week.

Average hours and days of employment varied for the different types of operations engaged in by the workers surveyed. Irrigators, swamplers and truck drivers worked the longest hours while berry pickers averaged the shortest (table 5). The latter group of workers worked an average of 6.5 hours a day and 4.2 days during the week.

There was little shifting about of the workers from farm to farm or from job to job during the survey week. All workers at the Shafter camp reported working on only one farm during this period, 96 percent of those at Linnell, and 84 percent of those at Arvin (table 6). Fourteen workers at Arvin worked on two different farms during the week and 4 at Linnell. Only one worker of the 310 surveyed worked on as many as three different farms during the period.

Rates of pay.--More than two-thirds of the workers were paid on an hourly basis. Hourly rates varied from one camp to another and for different operations for workers living in the same camp. The most usual hourly rate reported by workers at the Arvin camp was 70 cents; at Shafter, 75 cents; and at Linnell, 85 cents (table 7). At Arvin the plum pickers, grape thinners, and swamplers were usually paid 70 cents, but a few workers on these jobs were

Table 4.--Workers at USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, who worked a specified number of days and hours during the survey week, June 1945.

Time worked during week	Arvin			Linnell		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
Males						
Days						
Total	58	100	:	93	100	:
2 or less	1	2	:	11	12	:
2½	1	2	:	3	3	:
3	-	-	:	6	7	:
3½	-	-	:	-	-	:
4	4	7	:	12	13	:
4½	3	5	:	2	2	:
5	11	19	:	10	11	:
5½	25	43	:	2	2	:
6	8	14	:	40	43	:
6½	2	3	:	2	2	:
7	3	5	:	5	5	:
Hours			:			:
Total	58	100	:	93	100	:
Under 25	1	2	:	15	16	:
25 - 34	6	10	:	10	11	:
35 - 44	12	21	:	14	15	:
45 - 54	18	31	:	40	43	:
55 - 64	12	21	:	7	7	:
65 and over	9	15	:	7	7	:
Females						
Days						
Total	29	100	:	41	100	:
2 or less	-	-	:	8	20	:
2½	-	-	:	1	2	:
3	1	3	:	5	12	:
3½	1	3	:	-	-	:
4	3	10	:	7	17	:
4½	4	14	:	-	-	:
5	11	38	:	6	15	:
5½	5	17	:	-	-	:
6	4	14	:	10	24	:
6½	-	-	:	-	-	:
7	-	-	:	4	10	:
Hours			:			:
Total	29	100	:	41	100	:
Under 25	-	-	:	16	39	:
25 - 34	3	10	:	3	7	:
35 - 44	9	31	:	10	25	:
45 - 54	15	52	:	8	20	:
55 - 64	2	7	:	1	2	:
65 and over	-	-	:	3	7	:

Table 5.--Average time worked by workers surveyed in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Shafter, and Linnell, California during survey week, June 1945. 1/

Camp and operation	All workers	Hours per day	Age		
			Male	Female	Under 18
<u>Arvin</u>					
Total	9.7	: 10.0	9.0	:	8.9
Plum picking	9.1	: 9.2	9.0	:	9.0
Potato picking	8.9	: 8.8	9.0	:	8.8
Other farm operations	10.4	: 11.3	9.0	:	9.2
Processing	8.3	: 8.4	8.0	:	8.0
Non-agricultural work	11.0	: 11.0	-	:	11.0
<u>Linnell</u>					
Total	8.4	: 8.8	7.4	:	8.4
Plum picking	8.8	: 9.0	7.9	:	8.6
Berry picking	6.5	: 6.4	6.5	:	6.8
Other farm operations	8.8	: 8.9	8.7	:	9.0
Processing	8.3	: 9.2	7.1	:	8.0
<u>Shafter</u>					
Total	9.6	: 9.6	9.7	:	9.6
Potato picking	9.6	: 9.5	9.7	:	9.5
Other farm operations	9.9	: 10.0	9.5	:	10.0
Days per week					
<u>Arvin</u>					
Total	5.2	: 5.3	4.9	:	5.1
Plum picking	4.7	: 4.9	4.5	:	5.1
Potato picking	5.2	: 5.2	5.0	:	5.3
Other farm operations	5.5	: 5.8	5.0	:	5.5
Processing	5.0	: 4.7	6.0	:	4.0
Non-agricultural work	6.0	: 6.0	-	:	6.0
<u>Linnell</u>					
Total	4.7	: 4.9	4.3	:	4.5
Plum picking	4.8	: 4.8	5.0	:	4.7
Berry picking	4.2	: 4.7	4.1	:	4.7
Other farm operations	4.5	: 4.9	2.9	:	4.0
Processing	4.9	: 5.0	4.9	:	6.0
<u>Shafter</u>					
Total	5.7	: 5.7	5.8	:	5.5
Potato picking	5.7	: 5.6	5.8	:	5.5
Other farm operations	6.2	: 6.3	5.8	:	7.0

1/ Note that many of the averages shown are based on very small numbers of cases. The number of cases underlying each average in this table can be read from table 4.

Table 6.--Number of different farms worked on during survey week by workers surveyed in USDA Labor Supply Center at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, June 1945.

Farms worked on during week	Arvin		Linnell		Shafter	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	86	100	134	100	87	100
None	1	1/	8	1/	-	1/
One	71	84	121	95	87	100
Two	14	16	4	3	-	-
Three	-	-	1	1	-	-
	:	:	:	:	:	:

1/ Percentage based on those working on farms only.

paid more. Irrigators received 80 cents and some potato pickers as much as 85. At Shafter the workers who picked potatoes at hourly rates were paid 75 cents, guayule choppers received 65 cents; a potato inspector and 2 operators of potato digging equipment received \$1.00 an hour.

In the Arvin and Shafter camps, there was little difference in the wage rates reported by men and women. At Linnell, however, hourly rates tended to be 5 cents an hour higher for the men. Men in the Linnell camp most frequently reported an 85 cent an hour wage while women reported 80 cents. Higher wage rates for both men and women in this area may be due to the fact that the small operators there tend to pay higher wage rates in order to obtain the available labor. Larger operators are much more common in the Arvin area and they tended to keep to a minimum the bidding up of wage rates.

Table 7.--Workers in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, who were paid hourly rates of specified amounts during survey week, June 1945.

Camp, operation and sex of worker	Hourly rate								
	\$ .50	: .65	: .70	: .75	: .80	: .85	: .90	: \$1.00	
<b>Arvin</b>									
Total workers	-	1	42	7	6	9	-	-	-
Percent receiving each rate	-	1	65	11	9	14	-	-	-
<b>Potato picking</b>									
Male	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	-
Female	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
<b>Plum picking</b>									
Male	-	-	10	3	3	-	-	-	-
Female	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grape thinning</b>									
Irrigating	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Hauling, loading	-	-	5	-	2	1	-	-	-
<b>Other operations</b>									
	-	1	1	-	-	4	-	-	-

(continued)

Table 7.--Workers in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, who were paid hourly rates of specified amounts during survey week, June 1945.

Camp, operation and sex of worker	Hourly rate							
	.50	.65	.70	.75	.80	.85	.90	\$1.00
<u>Linnell</u>								
Total workers	1	-	3	4	28	50	12	2
Percent receiving each rate	1	-	3	4	28	50	12	2
Plum picking								
Male	-	-	-	-	15	26	5	-
Female	-	-	-	1	8	3	-	-
Pruning	-	-	-	-	1	7	-	-
Cotton chopping	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-
Apple picking	-	-	-	1	-	4	5	-
Other operations	1	-	3	1	2	10	2	2
<u>Shafter</u>								
Total workers	-	4	-	40	1	2	-	3
Percent receiving each rate	-	8	-	80	2	4	-	6
Potato picking								
Male	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	-
Female	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-
Grading potatoes	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Inspectors	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Chopping guayule	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Operating farm equipment	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2

: Hourly rates of pay tended to be the same for all workers within a family group who worked at the same operation. Bargaining for over-all family rates, involving the same rate of pay per hour for each family member, is a phenomenon of the wartime labor shortage. These family rates tended to be slightly lower if the head of the household was an older man, but were not affected by the inclusion of children 12 or 14 years of age as workers. Hourly rates now tend to depend on the operation rather than the worker when family groups are involved. When women or older men worked on an operation by themselves, they generally received lower hourly rates.

Piece rates did not show variation among workers within camps or from camp to camp. All workers reported that they were paid 6 cents a half-sack (or 12 cents a full-sack) for picking potatoes (table 8). This uniformity in rate may have been due to the fact that the specific wage ceiling rate for this operation set by the government was 6 cents. The potato picking rate was the only piece rate reported for workers in more than one camp; plum and berry pickers were paid by piece rate only at the Linnell camp.

Table 8.--Piece rates received by workers surveyed in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, during survey week, June 1945.

Operation	: Number workers reporting rate	:	Rate	:	Unit
Potato picking	41		\$ .06	Half-sack (50 lbs.)	
Potato picking	8		.12	Full-sack (100 lbs.)	
Berry picking	21		.35	Crate	
Swamping	7		.50	Ton	
Plum picking	5		.25	Box	
Plum packing	3		.11	Crate	
Cotton chopping	5		4.00	Acre	
Turkey picking	2		.14	Bird	

Performance of piece rate workers.--The number of piece rate workers enumerated was too small to add much evidence on the subject of performance and earnings of piece workers. More data on this point were obtained, however, in other special studies made by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics on the potato and plum harvests in the Kern and Tulare areas which were made at approximately the same time as the camp surveys. 2/ One of these was a sample study on the performance and earnings of all potato pickers in the Kern County area (including those not housed in USDA Labor Supply Centers). These data showed that potato pickers in the Shafter-Wasco area were averaging 159 half-sacks of potatoes in a 9.5-hour day and those at Arvin 184 half-sacks in a 9-hour day. These figures were for several hundred workers and covered the week of June 10 to 16, 1945. Average output per day for the smaller number of workers in the USDA camp at Arvin was 142 (table 9). This figure is for an 8.2-hour day. The men averaged 140 half-sacks in an 8.1-hour day and the women 149 half-sacks in 8.7 hours. Average hourly output of the men was 14.8 half-sacks and of the women, 16.4 half-sacks. 3/ The 8 workers

- 2/ Results from these surveys will appear in subsequent reports of the series, Surveys of Wages and Wage Rates in Agriculture.
- 3/ These outputs are well above the average as estimated by R. L. Adams of the University of California in Farm Management Crop Manual, University of California, 1941. His estimate was 120 half-sacks in a nine-hour day. Higher outputs per worker per day have been observed in numerous California crops within the last several years. These have often been due to unusually high yields, but high wages may have offered added incentive as well.

engaged in cotton chopping covered an average of 2.1 acres in a 10-hour day. 4/

Table 9.--Average performance and earnings per hour and per day of workers employed at piece rates at USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin and Linnell, California, survey week, June 1945. 1/

Operation, unit and sex of worker	Number workers surveyed	Units handled Per hour	Per day	Average earnings Per hour	Average earnings Per day
		:	:	Dollars	Dollars
Potato picking (half-sacks)		:	:	:	
Male	21	: 14.8	140	: .95	8.40
Female	6	: 16.4	149	: .99	8.90
Berry picking (crate)		:	:	:	
Male	6	: 2.2	14	: .76	4.80
Female	15	: 1.6	11	: .57	3.70
Plum picking (box)	5	: 4.3	44	: 1.07	11.00
Plum packing (crate)	3	: 3.5	24	: .93	6.80
Cotton chopping (acre)	5	: .21	2	: .86	8.60
Turkey picking (birds)		:	:	:	
Female	2	: 7.1	43	: 1.00	6.00
Hay baling (tons)		:	:	:	
Male	1	: 1.25	10	: 1.25	10.00

1/ Performance and earnings at Shafter were not reported.

Individual earnings:--Average earnings per worker for the week were \$38.40 at Arvin; \$32.20 at Linnell; and \$41.50 at Shafter (table 10). These earnings represent total earnings of the worker during the week, since the information obtained from workers housed in labor supply centers included a complete accounting of all work done for wages during the entire week. The figure for Shafter includes only the earnings of the workers paid hourly rates, as rate earnings were not reported at this camp. At Arvin the range of individual earnings was from \$11.90 to \$81.60; at Linnell it was from no earnings reported by an unemployed worker to \$59.40. One worker at Arvin had gross earnings of \$220. He was engaged in hauling potatoes and the figure included payment for use of his truck as well as for his labor.

Women earned significantly less per week than men, an average of \$34.90 for the women at Arvin, compared with \$44.70 for the men; and \$24.40 at Linnell, compared with \$35.60 for the men. As already indicated, this difference between men and women in weekly wages is largely due to differences in amount of employment and the type of work done. At Shafter, where potato picking was nearer the peak, female's averaged almost as much as male workers, \$41 compared with \$42.

4/ This performance is below the average output estimated by R. L. Adams. His estimate was 2.5 acres in a 9-hour day. The difference may be largely due to the fact that 5 of the 8 cotton choppers in the survey were under 18 years of age, while Adams' estimate relates to adult workers.

Similar variations existed among averages for the different age groups in the survey. Whereas the males 18 to 44 at Arvin earned an average of \$47.40 for the week, males under 18 averaged only \$34.00 and those over 44 years old averaged \$41.10. These differentials were also largely due to differences in amount and type of work done. Differences in average earnings among these three age groups were less marked for female workers.

The difference in earnings from camp to camp is reflected in the percentage of workers who earned less than \$30 during the week. None of the workers at Shafter, either male or female, reported earning less than \$30 (table 11). At the other extreme, 71 percent of the women at Linnell and 27 percent of the men earned less than this amount. Evidently seasonal farm workers' weekly incomes even in 1945 varied greatly, depending on whether they had full weeks of employment such as were available in the peak harvest season of certain special crops.

The proportion of workers who earned over \$50 a week was highest at Arvin. Almost one in three of the males there reported earning over this amount, compared with one in seven at Linnell and one in eight at Shafter.

Most frequently reported daily earnings of male workers at the Arvin camp were over \$8.00 whereas they were between \$7.00 and \$8.00 both at Linnell and Shafter. A majority of the women at Linnell reported earnings of less than \$6.00 a day, a majority at Arvin of from \$6.00 to \$7.00 and at Shafter of \$7.00 to \$8.00.

Table 10.--Average cash wages earned by workers surveyed in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, June 1945. 1/

Camp and operation				Age		
	All workers	Male	Female	Under 18	18-44	45 and over
Dollars per hour						
Arvin						
Total	.80	.82	.74	.76	.80	.81
Plum picking	.70	.70	.70	.70	.70	.70
Potato picking	.89	.90	.86	.80	.94	1.02
Other farm operations	.75	.78	.70	.73	.76	.78
Processing	.82	.86	.70	.75	1.00	.70
Non-agricultural work	.98	.98	-	-	.98	-
Linnell						
Total	.83	.85	.75	.75	.85	.85
Plum picking	.85	.86	.81	.87	.85	.83
Berry picking	.63	.76	.57	.33	.83	.77
Processing	.85	.87	.81	.85	.83	.99
Other farm operations	.85	.85	.85	.84	.86	.84
Shafter						
Total 2/	.77	.77	.76	.76	.75	.84
Potato picking	.76	.77	.76	.76	.75	.83
Other farm operations	.79	.78	.81	.85	.75	.84

(continued)

Table 10.--Average cash wages earned by workers surveyed in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, June 1945, continued.

Camp and operation	All workers	Male	Female	Age		
				Under 18	18-44	45 and over
<u>Dollars per day</u>						
<u>Arvin</u>						
Total	7.60	: 8.10	6.60	: 6.80	7.80	7.70
Plum picking	6.40	: 6.40	6.30	: 6.30	6.30	6.50
Potato picking	7.90	: 7.90	7.80	: 7.10	8.20	9.70
Other farm operations	7.90	: 8.80	6.30	: 6.80	8.10	7.50
Processing	6.80	: 7.30	5.60	: 6.00	9.00	5.60
Non-agricultural work	10.80	: 10.80	-	: -	10.80	-
<u>Linnell</u>						
Total	7.00	: 7.50	5.60	: 6.30	7.10	7.40
Plum picking	7.40	: 7.80	6.40	: 7.50	7.40	7.60
Berry picking	4.10	: 4.80	3.70	: 2.30	5.20	4.20
Other farm operations	7.60	: 7.60	7.40	: 7.50	7.70	7.50
Processing	7.00	: 8.00	5.70	: 6.80	7.00	7.40
<u>Shafter</u>						
Total 2/	7.40	: 7.40	7.40	: 7.30	7.30	8.10
Potato picking	7.30	: 7.20	7.10	: 7.20	7.20	8.00
Other farm operations	7.80	: 7.80	7.70	: 8.50	7.40	8.40
<u>Dollars per week</u>						
<u>Arvin</u>						
Total	39.60	: 43.10	32.50	: 34.40	41.00	39.80
Plum picking	29.90	: 31.20	28.30	: 32.10	28.40	29.00
Potato picking	40.80	: 41.30	39.00	: 37.30	41.80	48.30
Other farm operations	43.00	: 50.60	31.70	: 33.80	41.30	45.90
Processing	33.90	: 34.00	33.60	: 24.00	54.00	33.60
Non-agricultural work	65.00	: 65.00	-	: -	65.00	-
<u>Linnell</u>						
Total	32.50	: 36.60	24.00	: 28.20	34.20	13.90
Plum picking	36.00	: 37.40	32.00	: 34.70	36.70	35.50
Berry picking	17.30	: 22.50	15.20	: 10.70	22.60	8.50
Other farm operations	33.90	: 37.10	21.30	: 30.10	36.30	34.80
Processing	34.60	: 39.90	27.80	: 40.80	34.30	33.50
<u>Shafter</u>						
Total 2/	42.30	: 41.90	43.00	: 40.70	40.30	49.30
Potato picking	41.30	: 40.50	42.90	: 39.70	39.70	47.30
Other farm operations	46.00	: 49.60	44.30	: 59.50	43.50	54.50

1/ Note that many of the averages shown are based on very small numbers of cases. The number of cases underlying each average in this table can be read from table 4.

2/ Figures are only for 52 workers paid at hourly rates, who were 60 percent of all workers surveyed at Shafter.

Table 11.--Workers in USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, who earned specified amounts, during survey week, by sex, June 1945.

Sex and weekly earnings	Arvin		Linnell		Shafter	1/
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>Weekly</u>						
Male - total	58	100	93	100	32	100
Under \$30	14	24	25	27	-	-
\$30 - \$39	14	24	15	16	17	53
\$40 - \$49	11	19	39	42	11	34
\$50 and over	19	33	14	15	4	13
Female - total	29	100	41	100	18	100
Under \$30	10	35	29	71	-	-
\$30 - \$39	15	52	4	10	7	39
\$40 - \$49	3	10	5	12	11	61
\$50 and over	1	3	3	7	-	-
<u>Daily</u>						
Male - total	58	100	93	100	32	100
Under \$6.00	11	19	10	11	-	-
\$6.00 - \$6.99	14	24	13	14	13	40
\$7.00 - \$7.99	5	9	45	48	15	47
\$8.00 and over	28	48	25	27	4	13
Female - total	29	100	41	100	18	100
Under \$6.00	4	14	23	56	-	-
\$6.00 - \$6.99	19	66	5	12	3	17
\$7.00 - \$7.99	3	10	11	27	13	72
\$8.00 and over	3	10	2	5	2	11

1/ Figures are only for 52 workers paid at hourly rates, who were 60 percent of all workers surveyed at Shafter.

Earnings by operation.--As already indicated, many of the differences in earnings both for age and sex groups and from one camp to another resulted from differences in type of work done. At one extreme were the 21 berry pickers at Linnell. They earned an average of 63 cents an hour, \$3.90 a day, and \$17.30 for the week. Next lowest earnings were those of grape thinners, who earned 70 cents an hour, \$6.30 a day, and \$30.70 a week. At the other extreme were the workers engaged in loading and hauling potatoes, plums, and other crops. They had average earnings of \$9.20 a day and \$64.80 a week. Operators of other farm equipment also had high earnings, \$52.90; foremen, \$51.20, and irrigators, \$45.80.

Earnings from the major operations in the picking of potatoes and plums were usually below the average for all workers. Potato pickers at Shafter averaged \$38.60 a week and at Arvin \$39.50. Plum pickers earned \$34.50 a week at Arvin and \$35.90 at Linnell (table 10).

The few persons working at nonfarm operations (mainly packing or processing agricultural products) earned slightly less per hour than those working at farm jobs. Their weekly pay check, however, was slightly larger, on the average, as their work was more regular.

Family earnings.--Earnings per family varied widely, depending on the number of workers per family unit and on the duration of their employment. At Arvin, average earnings per family were \$100 for the survey week. At Linnell they were \$60, (table 11). The average number of workers per family was 2.6 at Arvin and 1.8 at Linnell. Data were obtained at Shafter only for families working on an hourly basis. These earned an average of approximately \$100 per family.

At Linnell, 33 of the 73 families interviewed had only one worker and these workers had average earnings of \$35 for the week (table 12). This accounts in a large measure for the low average family earnings at this camp. At Arvin only 7 families out of 34 reported having only one worker and these had average earnings of \$60. At Shafter 9 out of 18 of the families on hourly rates had only one worker and these had average earnings of \$45.

Three families at Linnell had 5 workers each and averaged earnings of \$215 per family unit for the survey week. Two families at Shafter contained six workers each and their earnings averaged \$241. The close correlation between earnings and family size is shown in table 13.

Table 12.--Average earnings per family by number of workers in family, USDA Labor Supply Centers, Arvin, Linnell, and Shafter, California, June 1945.

Number workers in family:	Arvin No. families surveyed	Linnell No. Families surveyed	Shafter No. families surveyed	1/ Average earnings
All families:	34	\$ 99.62	73	\$ 60.48
1:	7	59.90	33	35.30
2:	12	77.20	27	61.30
3:	8	119.20	8	96.00
4:	4	120.60	2	90.30
5:	2	196.20	3	215.40
6:	1	212.50	-	-

1/ Figures are only for 52 workers paid at hourly rates, who were 60 percent of all workers surveyed at Shafter.

Table 13.--Families with total weekly earnings of specified amounts, by number of workers in family, USDA Labor Supply Centers at Arvin and Linnell, and Shafter, California, June 1945.

Weekly earnings Dollars	All families Number	Percent	Number of workers in family					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
Total	34	100	7	12	8	4	2	1
Under 20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20 - 40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
40 - 60	7	21	4	3	-	-	-	-
60 - 80	7	21	3	4	-	-	-	-
80 - 100	4	12	-	3	1	-	-	-
100 - 120	9	26	-	2	4	3	-	-
120 - 140	2	6	-	-	2	-	-	-
140 - 160	3	9	-	-	1	1	1	1
160 - over	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	1

(cont'd)

Table 13.--Families with total weekly earnings of specified amounts, by number of workers in family, USDA, Labor Supply Centers at Arvin and Linnell, and Shafter, California, June 1945, continued.

Weekly earnings	All families		Number of workers in family					
	Number	Percent	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Dollars</b>								
Total	73	100	33	27	8	2	3	-
Under 20	6	8	5	1	-	-	-	-
20 - 40	16	22	13	3	-	-	-	-
40 - 60	23	32	14	8	1	-	-	-
60 - 80	11	15	1	8	2	-	-	-
80 - 100	10	14	-	7	1	2	-	-
100 - 120	2	3	-	-	2	-	-	-
120 - 140	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
140 - 160	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
160 - over	3	4	-	-	-	-	3	-
<b>Dollars</b>								
Total	18	100	9	2	2	1	2	2
Under 20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20 - 40	4	22	4	-	-	-	-	-
40 - 60	4	22	4	-	-	-	-	-
60 - 80	3	17	1	2	-	-	-	-
80 - 100	1	6	-	-	1	-	-	-
100 - 120	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
120 - 140	1	6	-	-	1	-	-	-
140 - 160	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
160 - over	5	27	-	1	-	1	2	2

<sup>1/</sup> Includes only those families all of whose workers were employed at hourly rates; earnings at piece work were not reported at this camp.

Perquisites.--Since the workers lived in government camps, the record of perquisites is brief. Thirty-six workers at the Arvin camp reported that they were transported to and from their work, seven at Linnell, and none at Shafter. The practice of transporting workers was quite common at Arvin and was afforded to workers in all types of operations, both seasonal and year-round. All workers at Linnell reporting transportation furnished were seasonal plum and apple pickers. Apparently growers in the Shafter area had not adopted the practice, even at the height of the potato harvest.

Method of sampling.--Record cards are maintained for each family unit housed in USDA Labor Supply Centers. Sampling was done on a family basis, by including all workers in every fifth family at the Arvin and Shafter camps, and every third family at Linnell. The heavier rate at Linnell was adopted in order to secure an adequate sample of the plum harvest area.

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